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ABSTRACT

Now that there are enough school-restructuring experiments to evaluate, one can examine what has been learned about transforming the restructuring concept into reality. Although principals recognize that restructuring will reshape their leadership role, studies show these administrators are pivotal to school-improvement efforts. Fred Newmann differentiates restructuring proposals according to four areas (student experiences, teachers' professional life, school management and leadership, and coordination of community resources) and presents six outcomes (authentic achievement, equity, empowerment, communities of learning, reflective dialogue, and accountability) for evaluating new structures. David Conley brings together findings from research, practice, policy analyses, and reformers' works. His book examines restructuring's rationale and context, changing role and responsibilities, dimensions, and process. Mark Berends' study of 214 schools discusses which of four general schooling categories were most frequently restructured, examines specific criteria met in each category, and speculates about why few of these schools were comprehensively restructured. Valerie Lee and Julia Smith focus on restructuring effects on middle-school students' achievement, engagement with academic work, and at-risk behaviors. Betty Davidson reports on how teachers' roles were affected in four schools that exchanged a top-down structure for a participatory, bottom-up Accelerated Schools model. (MLH)

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Research ROUNDUP

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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Taking Stock of School Restructuring

Linda Lumsden

Ask ten educators what *restructuring* means and you will probably get ten different, maybe even contradictory, answers. The term seems to elude precise definition: what one "expert" deems genuine restructuring, another terms reform or renewal.

In spite of mixed reactions to restructuring both inside and outside of education, a number of schools have taken the plunge. Now that there are enough restructuring experiments in schools around the country for researchers to begin to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, it is useful to look at what is being learned in transforming the concept of restructuring into reality.

Although principals recognize that their leadership role will be reshaped by restructuring, studies show that they will continue to play a pivotal role. For without a principal at the helm, fostering shared commitment, spawning a collective sense of vision, and providing guidance and direction, school improvement is likely to be shallow and short-lived.

Fred Newmann takes a wide-angle approach to restructuring, first differentiating proposals according to four areas of emphasis, and then presenting six outcomes that educators can use to evaluate new structures.

David Conley also offers a panoramic view of restructuring in bringing together findings from research, practice, policy analyses, and the works of reformers. His book is divided into four parts: restructuring's rationale and context; changing roles and responsibilities; the dimensions of restructuring; and the process of restructuring.

Mark Berends' study examines the extent of restructuring in 214 schools. He discusses which of four general categories of schooling were most frequently restructured, looks at specific criteria that were met in each of these categories, and speculates about why so few of the schools studied were comprehensively restructured.

Valerie Lee and Julia Smith focus on the effect of restructuring on middle school students—in particular, its effect on student achievement, engagement with academic work, and at-risk behaviors among eighth graders.

Betty Davidson reports on how the role of teachers was affected in four schools that shed a traditional, top-down structure and implemented a participatory, bottom-up structure by adopting the Accelerated Schools model.

Newmann, Fred. **What Is a "Restructured" School? A Framework to Clarify Means and Ends.** Issues in Restructuring Schools, Report No. 1. Madison, Wis.: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. *Copies available from Karen Prager, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, University of Wisconsin, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706. 608-263-7575.*

Although designed to guide research at the National Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, where Newmann is director, this article can be used by teachers, administrators and policy mak-

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EA 024 825

ers to assess the value of various structural changes at the school level.

Newmann underscores the point that if a school wants to restructure it "must first build a foundation—by clarifying the educational ends it seeks, assessing its unique needs, and analyzing how it must change to serve the ends." He identifies four emphases of most proposals—student experiences; professional life of teachers; school management and leadership; and coordination of community resources—noting that schools usually concentrate on changes in only one or two of these areas.

Newmann looks at possible ramifications of restructuring on six valued outcomes of schooling: *authentic achievement; equity; empowerment; communities of learning; reflective dialogue*; and *accountability*.

He recommends integrating more *authentic achievement* into the learning equation in order "to produce discourse, material objects, and performances that have personal, aesthetic, and utilitarian value.

Because students' educational opportunities are still often influenced by race, social class, gender, or cultural background, the issue of *equity* must not be neglected. Some restructuring initiatives, such as school choice and site-based management, have the potential of widening rather than narrowing existing disparities.

Empowerment can also be a mixed blessing because costs as well as benefits are incurred when alterations are made in the decision making process. For example, when teachers assume broader responsibilities, they have less time to systematically reflect on instruction.

Creating *communities of learning* entails shedding the traditional hierarchical teacher-student relationship, giving everyone a voice in shaping school life, and focusing on common experience and goals. Cooperative and small-group learning, site-based management, and magnet schools, while consistent with this goal, cannot alone ensure a true sense of community.

Reflective dialogue grows from an understanding that beliefs cannot be imposed on others, but rather change through dialogue that leads to examination of one's assumptions.

Finally, *accountability* reflects the right of taxpayers, parents, and students to thorough and meaningful documentation of student outcomes as a basis for judging school performance.

Conley, David. **Roadmap to Restructuring: Educator's Guide to Emerging Visions of Schooling.** Eugene, Ore: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, forthcoming. 421 pages. *Available June 1993 from ERIC/CEM Publications, 1787 Agate St., Eugene, OR 97403. 800-438-8841.*

Readers of this book are treated to a smorgasbord of observations and recommendations on restructuring derived from research, policy analyses, and the works of prominent educational reformers. Conley, an associate professor in the University of Oregon's Division of Educational Policy and Management, draws on nearly 500 sources as well as his personal experience as a consultant to restructuring schools. He begins by presenting a historical context within which restructuring can be considered, and discusses some of the motivations and implications.

In part 2, devoted to changes in roles and responsibilities, Conley emphasizes the relationship between central office and school, the role of teachers, and the community's link to education. In part 3, Conley devotes a chapter to each of 12 dimensions that constitute restructuring, including those Conley calls the "central variables"—learning outcomes, curriculum, instruction, and assessment. These receive special attention because of their powerful impact on student learning.

Conley points out that many schools are altering what he terms "enabling variables"—learning environment, use of technology, school-community relations, and time structure—and "supporting variables"—governance models, teacher leadership, personnel structures, and labor relations—without linking these changes to the critical central variables.

In part 4, Conley discusses the difficulty of producing change in education, provides examples of promising strategies, and alerts readers to possible restructuring pitfalls. According to Conley, schools where restructuring is proceeding successfully usually are led by people who have a thorough understanding of their school's culture, and who attend to the structural, political, human resource, and symbolic dimensions of organization in ways that enable the school to accept change more readily.

About ERIC

The Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a national information system operated by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI). The ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, one of 16 such units in the system, was established at the University of Oregon in 1966.

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Berends, Mark. **A Description of Restructuring in Nationally Nominated Schools.** Madison, Wis.: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, February 1992. 20 pages. *Copies available from Karen Prager, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, University of Wisconsin, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706. 608-263-7575.*

To obtain a "snapshot" of current restructuring efforts in the U.S., Berends invited more than 6,000 individuals and organizations to nominate schools to serve as research sites for the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools. By fall 1991 he had received 214 nominations from schools that claimed to be restructured. Principals at these schools completed a questionnaire to help researchers determine which of 38 criteria, under four themes, had been met in the restructuring process.

The criteria satisfied most often by the sample schools tended to cluster around two of the four themes—student experiences and the professional life of teachers. Fewer criteria were met in the two other restructuring areas, community coordination and governance.

When researchers visited the sites, they discovered that most principals had overstated the extent of restructuring, apparently due to variances in their definitions of the criteria. Ultimately, only 23 percent of the nominated schools were classified as comprehensively restructured, meaning that they met a specified number of criteria within at least three of the four themes. This finding, according to Berends, indicates that if the nominated schools are "representative of the *creme de la creme* of restructured schools in the U. S., comprehensive restructuring is rare indeed."

Lee, Valerie E., and Julia B. Smith. **Effects of School Restructuring on the Achievement and Engagement of Middle-Grade Students.** University of Michigan, December, 1992. 55 pages. *Copies available from Karen Prager, Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, University of Wisconsin, 1025 W. Johnson Street, Madison, WI 53706. 608-263-7575.*

The impact of restructured schools on student achievement, engagement with academic work, and at-risk behavior among young adolescents is examined by researchers Lee and Smith of the University of Michigan. Using multilevel analytic methods and a large, nationally representative sample of middle-grade students (8,845 eighth graders from 377 schools), they found that, although the effects were modest, restructured schools tended to be positively associated with academic achievement.

Equally important, they note, was their finding that in restructured middle-grade schools there was less disparity in academic outcomes among students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The study also found that in schools where ability grouping was limited or nonexistent, and a looser structure prevailed for matching students to coursework, there was less variation in achievement across social classes, though the average level of achievement remained unchanged.

Effects of restructuring on students' engagement with schooling were less clear. Although students attending restructured schools tended to be more engaged in academic work, their involvement in at-risk behavior also tended to be higher. The authors hypothesize that this finding may merely reflect a stronger emphasis on restructuring in schools where large numbers of students are engaged in at-risk behavior.

In general, this study supports the notion that bureaucratization breeds alienation and disengagement, and conversely, that a communal organizational structure promotes engagement. The study also found that students in schools with small classes were more academically engaged, and that achievement was more evenly distributed in those schools.

Davidson, Betty M. **Transforming Schools: Foundations for School Restructuring Focusing on the Role of the Teacher in Four Elementary Schools.** Paper presented at annual meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, New Orleans, April 4, 1992. 27 pages. *Copies available from ASCD, 1250 N. Pitt St., Alexandria, VA 22314-1403. 703-549-9110.*

Davidson reports on four elementary schools in large urban systems that moved from a traditional, top-down form of organization to a participatory, bottom-up approach by adopting the Accelerated Schools model. Prior to implementing the model, staff at the four schools "viewed the principal as the decision maker and themselves as robots programmed to follow directions."

The Accelerated Schools model has three guiding principles: Unity of purpose, which involves developing a vision of the organizational framework that will facilitate and support the movement of students into the mainstream; teacher, parent, and

student empowerment: and full utilization of all human resources in the school and larger communities. By emphasizing speeding up, and not slowing down, the progress of at-risk students, the model's long-term goal is to close the "achievement gap" by the time students complete elementary school.

Accomplishing this usually entails transforming the way schools are organized, and this study focuses primarily on change in one variable—the role of the teacher. To gauge the degree of change, Davidson interviewed teachers, principals, assistant principals, social workers, and parents. She found that the principal's leadership style appeared to be a critical factor in enriching or diluting the Accelerated School model.

While teachers were found to be empowered to participate in decision making in three of the four schools, the initial climate in one of those schools was characterized by teacher demoralization and record high turnover, attributed largely to the principal's autocratic leadership style. Only after the principal was replaced by one who treated them as professionals did the teachers gain the confidence to assume leadership roles, pursue innovations in the curriculum, and fully utilize their skills.

At the fourth school, the teachers were initially excited about becoming decision makers. But after the principal rejected several of their decisions, they became distrustful and dissatisfied, disempowered rather than empowered.

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Managing the Incompetent Teacher

One of a principal's major responsibilities is helping all teachers succeed. This revised edition, produced by NAESP in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, presents an organizational approach for adopting criteria, evaluation, remediation, and providing the necessary resources for even the marginal teacher. It also describes procedures to ensure fairness if dismissal is necessary. Written by Edwin M. Bridges, professor of education at Stanford University, with the assistance of Barry Groves, director of personnel for the Lucia Mar (California) Unified School District.

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